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The Principalities

I. Abu Dhabi

This principality is the largest in area and only second in importance to Shārjah. It stretches along the coast from the creek of Ghanādhah on the N. to that of 'Odeid on the W., a distance of over 200 miles. Towards the interior the boundaries are ill defined; they are said to extend on the E. to the Bireimi oasis, and on the S. to the margin of the Ruba' el-Khāli desert. The settled population is believed to be between 10,000 and 15,000, while the Bedouins (chiefly Beni Yās and Manāsīr) may number nearly 4,000. The ruling Sheikh is Hamdān ibn Zeid el-Khalīfah, who succeeded his brother Tahnūn in 1912, and is described as a firm ruler, able to maintain order. During the period of anxiety following the victories of Ibn Sa'ūd of Nejd in 1913, he endeavoured to introduce arms and ammunition on the plea that the Emir might invade his territories (see above). In the same year he negotiated a truce between the Sultan of Oman and the rebel chiefs. He appears to be a worthy descendant of his predecessor Zeid ibn Khalīfah, who in 1908 was the most powerful personality in Trucial Oman. The principality consists of the following districts from E. to W.: Abu Dhabi, Dhafrah (including Beinūnah and Līwah) Sabkhah Matti, Mijan, and 'Aqal, with the possible addition of Khatam. It further includes the islands of Arzanah, Dayyīnah, Dalmah, Dās, Qarnein Salāli, Yās, and Zirko.

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i. *Abu Dhabi*, the 'home district', consists of undulating sandy desert, with scanty grazing and poor water-supply; there are, however, wells on or near the routes to the Bireimi oasis at *Bul Huweil*, *Masheirif*, and *Juhar*, and at *Silmiyah*, 20 miles SSE. of Abu Dhabi town. *Sūq Iblīs*, about 25 miles E. of the town, is a fantastically shaped outcrop of sandstone forming a landmark on the main Bireimi road. *Sameih*, 6 or 7 miles E. of Khōr el-Ghanādhah, is a hilly place with 7 wells of poor water used as a rendezvous by tribesmen of Abu Dhabi and Dibai when preparing for war. The only village of consequence is *Batīn* on the N. shore of the inlet of the same name, 1¼ miles SW. of the nearest part of Abu Dhabi town; it consists of 130 date-branch huts belonging to the Āl Bu Maheir and Sūdān tribes; it has some date plantations with wells, and 50 pearl-boats.

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The town of **Abu Dhabi** is situated on the coast, about 88 miles SW. of Shārjah, with a population of over 6,000. It extends for about 1¼ miles along the shore, and consists chiefly of mat huts,

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361 with only a few stone buildings; the Sheikh's large rectangular
621 fort, with towers at the corners, is a little distance inland behind
438 the town, and on the outskirts in the same direction is a bazaar of Indian traders from Tatta in Sind. There are some indifferent wells at the back of the town, and shallow pits yield water at a place 3–4 miles distant; formerly water was brought by sea from Dibai. The bazaar has about 70 shops, more than half of which are kept by Persians, and a third by Hindus. The people live almost entirely by pearl-diving and fishing, there being little cultivation, but they own more than 700 camels. About half are of the Beni Yās tribe, the remainder of various other tribes, chiefly Āl Bu Maheir, Sūdān, and Marar. The Persians number 500, the Hindus less than a hundred.

At high tide Abu Dhabi becomes an island, through the connexion of creeks and backwaters. About 10 miles inland there is a ford on the creek called *Khōr el-Maqta'*, connecting the interior of Khōr el-Batīn with the sea at a point 2 or 3 miles beyond the town. Here a fort on a sandbank in the middle of the creek commands the passage to the mainland, which can only be made on foot at low tide.

•634 ii. *Dhafrah*, between the Persian Gulf on the N. and the Great
133 Desert on the S., is bounded on the W. by Sabkhat Matti and the
361 Jāfūrah desert, and on the E. by Khatam. It is a vast region, containing at least five known tracts, *Līwah*, *Beinūnah*, *Qufa*, *Taff*, and *Dhafrah Proper*. Līwah, the most important, lies farthest inland; it is a narrow belt 175 miles long, running E. and W., and consisting of undulating white sand-dunes, with a series of more than 20 depressions, each of which contains fertile soil and supports the cultivation of a neighbouring village; water is obtained at about 12 ft. Beinūnah is a tract of heavy red sand or soil, with scrub and grazing, lying NW. of Līwah, and between it and the Gulf. Qufa, N. of Līwah, is a barren region of sandy ridges, with a few shallow wells; Taff, a maritime strip extending the whole length of Dhafrah. The tract of Dhafrah Proper is E. of Beinūnah, and resembles it in character. The inhabitants of the whole of Dhafrah belong to the Beni Yās and Manāsīr tribes. The remaining tracts are of less importance. iii. *Sabkhah Matti* is a coastal district W. of Beinūnah, extending for a distance of about 30 miles and consisting of a saline or nitrous marsh without wells or vegetation. iv. *Mijan*, W. of the preceding, is a district of stony mounds and firm pebbly tracts, with some grazing in winter, and a good many wells. v. *'Aqal*, between Mijan and the base of the peninsula of El-Qatar, is a tract of heavy dark sand. vi. *Khatam* lies NE. of Dhafrah Proper,

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and is said to be a meeting-ground of the Beni Yās, Manāsīr, and Na'īm tribes.

Of the islands, only *Dalmah* and *Yās* need be described. The former lies more than 40 miles E. by S. of the mouth of the *Khōr el-'Odeid*, and about half that distance from the nearest point of the coast to the SE. It is 5 miles by 2½ miles, and for the most part hilly, with wells of brackish water and deposits of red oxide of iron. There is a small settlement of Beni Yās; but the chief importance of the island is that at the end of the pearling season a temporary bazaar is set up, and persons engaged in the trade, including the Indian merchants of the Trucial Coast, go there to collect debts and purchase pearls. Yās is about 20 miles SE. of Dalmah, and only a few miles from the shore at Jebel Dhannah. It is 6½ miles by 5 miles, with low shores, but central volcanic hills; at the S. end is a landlocked natural harbour known to British sailors as Meriton Bay, with a depth of 4–6 fathoms. Water is only obtainable after rain. The island is visited in winter by Beni Yās fishermen.

II. Dibai

This small principality lies on the Gulf Coast S. of Shārjah, between Abu Heil on the N. and the creek Khōr Ghanādhah on the S.; its extent towards the interior is not precisely known. It consists of low sandy country without important natural features, the only hill being Jebel el-'Āli, 19 miles SW. of Dibai town, which, though only 225 ft. high, is a landmark visible for 17 miles. The town contains almost the whole settled population, the only other places with permanent inhabitants being the small coast village of *Jumeirah*, 3 miles to the SW., and the larger isolated village of *Hajarein*, 50 miles away to the SE. in the Wādi Hatta, an isolated dependency, geographically belonging to the Sultanate of Oman.

The ruler of Dibai is Sheikh Sa'īd ibn Makhtūm, who succeeded his cousin Būti ibn Suheil in 1912, and is at feud with the latter's family. He is a wealthy chief, owing to the commercial importance of his capital, but his relations with the Indian Government have not been uniformly good; in August 1913 he had to be warned because a boat of H.M.S. *Sphinx* was fired on from the town. There had been trouble under previous rulers, chiefly owing to the use of Dibai by smugglers of arms (see above, p. 336).

The town of **Dibai**, with a population perhaps not far from 20,000, lies 7 miles SW. of Shārjah and 79 miles NE. of Abu Dhabi, on both sides of a creek with a shallow entrance extending some miles to the SE.; it was once walled, but with the exception of towers on

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broken from control under the influence of the sheikh of Fujeirah. 635
The town of Dibah, the appanage of another relative, who enjoys the title of Vali, in like manner adds nothing to the exchequer of the Sheikh.

The principality, in its undiminished state, consisted of four 634.
districts, Ras el-Kheimah in the N., Shameilīyah on the E., Dheid in the interior, and Shārjah proper on the W. The island of Sirri is claimed by Persia, and is no longer effectively occupied by the Sheikh of Shārjah. The districts are described in the following sections :

i. *Ras el-Kheimah* is divided from the Ru'ūs el-Jibāl district of 634
the Oman Sultanate on the NE. by a line running obliquely from 133
Ras esh-Sha'am on the W. coast of the promontory to a point 361
between the villages of Dibah and Bei'ah on the E. coast ; on the W. its boundary is the sea ; the S. boundary follows a line drawn from Jezīrat el-Hamra to the S. extremity of the Jiri plain, from which point a line to Dibah forms the limit on the SE. The district consists of low sandy desert near the sea, rising to the hill country of the Oman promontory. Its chief subdivisions are the plain of *Sīr*, a cultivated strip on the coast, extending from about 3 miles S. of Rams to about 7 miles S. of Ras el-Kheimah town, with a length of about 12 miles and an extreme breadth of about 5 miles in the S. ; and *Jiri*, immediately S. of Sīr, a cultivated plain of dark soil between the Oman hills on the E. and sandy desert on the W. The upper part of the Wādi Hām, dividing the district from Shameilīyah, belongs to Ras el-Kheimah. Several islands are also connected with the district. *Jezīrat el-Hamra* (also called *Jezīrat ez-Za'āb*), which is low and sandy, lies 12 miles WSW. of Ras el-Kheimah town ; it runs for 2 miles parallel to the coast, with which it is nearly joined at low water. *Bu Mūsa*, in the Gulf, about half-way between Shārjah town and Lingeh on the Persian coast, has a maximum length of about 3 miles ; it also is low and sandy, with occasional isolated hills, possessing about 20 wells and a small date plantation. There is a permanent population of about 20 households from *Khān* in Shārjah, owning pearl-boats and live stock, and a shifting population composed of fishermen from the mainland of Oman and Persians who work deposits of re l oxide of iron for a Lingah contractor. *Sīr Bu Na'air* lies about 70 miles from the coast, a little S. of W. ; it is 2½ miles by 2 miles, uninhabited, with hills of volcanic rock, a low sandy point in the SE., and neighbouring pearl-banks ; it possesses brackish wells and salt deposits in the hills. *Tunb*, about 32 miles NE. of Bu Mūsa, with a few permanent inhabitants and a well on the S. side, is about 2¼ miles in diameter, and rises

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634 133 361 to 165 ft. at its highest point; except for a little grazing it is barren. *Nābiyu Tunb*, 8 miles to the W. of Tunb, with an area of 1 mile by ¼ mile, is uninhabited and without water.

[632] 361 621 438 The town of **Ras el-Kheimah**, consisting of about 1,000 houses and forming the administrative centre of the district, is on the Gulf Coast, about 48 miles N. of Shārjah town. Sheikh Sālim ibn Sultān claims to be independent of Shārjah, but his independence has not yet been recognized. The town stands upon a narrow spit of land 2½ miles long, running parallel to the coast and connected with the mainland at the SW. end; the creek between the spit and the shore, though its entrance at low tide is only 2 ft. deep, has a general depth of 9 ft., and forms a good anchorage for native boats; large vessels must anchor 2½ miles to 3 miles NW. of the town.

About half of the houses are of stone and gypsum mortar, the remainder of date-branches. There is an old fort of no military value, and a ruinous wall crosses the isthmus SW. of the town. The inhabitants are a mixed race known as Ahl Ras el-Kheimah, occupying 400 houses, Mahārah (250 houses), Āl 'Ali (150 houses), and Āl Bu Maheir (120 houses), with a few Na'īm, Baluchis, and Khōjahs. Drinking-water is scanty and of poor quality. The town possesses about 16,000 date-palms, while the large groves belonging to *Sīr* begin on the mainland opposite the town. The people own 33 pearl-boats and 15 other sea-going vessels, with about 120 fishing-boats; live stock includes some 800 goats, 150 cattle, 175 donkeys, 130 camels, and 20 horses. Trade resembles that of other ports on the Trucial Coast; the chief manufacture is of daggers. At Mahārah, the site of an old village on the E. side of the creek, there is usually a temporary colony, sometimes of Persians from Rams. The chief villages, of 100 houses and above, are as follows:——

In Ras el-Kheimah district:

1. *Rams*: 400 houses, mostly of mud and stone, on the coast about 8 miles NE. of Ras el-Kheimah town, on the S. side of a small creek with shallow entrance. The inhabitants are Taneij, chiefly pearl-divers and fishermen, but owning date plantations partly situated at *Dhāyah*, a place now uninhabited, 2 miles inland. Live-stock includes 500 goats, 50 donkeys, 20 camels, 20 head of cattle.

2. *Sha'am*: about 300 houses, mostly of mud, on the coast 17 miles NNE. of Ras el-Kheimah town and 2 miles S. of Ras Sha'am. Inhabitants are all Shihūh, occupied with pearl-diving, fishing, and cultivation, and owning a few pearl-boats and coasting vessels, with 7,000 date-palms. Live stock: 50 donkeys, 30 camels, 20 head of cattle. About 1 mile S. is a small tower upon a hillock used for defence.